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Good Cleaning Calls for Good Tools

A broadcast by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Monday, February 24, 1941, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, over Stations associated with the Blue Network of the National Broadcasting Company.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

And now Ruth Van Deman with some pointers from the Bureau of Home Economics on choosing tools for easy housecleaning.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Easier, to be strictly accurate, Wallace. Housecleaning still takes a lot of elbow grease no matter how good the tools are.

KADDERLY:

But the right tools take a lot of the backbreaking, knee-bending, blister-raising element out of housecleaning surely.

VAN DEMAN:

Oh yes, good tools make it what the scientists call moderately active muscular work as against hard work.....or even light work if you include tools like vacuum cleaners and power floor waxers, where the electric motor takes the place of muscle power.

KADDERLY:

But with all the present day helps for the housekeeper, isn't it true that the No. 1 tool in housecleaning is still the good old broom?

VAN DEMAN:

It's one of the things no well-equipped cleaning closet can be without. There was a time not so many years ago when all the brooms for household use were made out of broom corn. Now, in addition to broom corn, which is still our main broom material, they're made of Chinese palm and tampico fiber.

KADDERLY:

Tampico fiber? That's that tough fiber from the Mexican agave plant.

VAN DEMAN:

That's right. These tough brown vegetable fibers are fastened into a block of wood and a metal cap put over that. Tampico fiber makes a very good wearing broom, more expensive than some other kinds, but worth the extra cost perhaps if it's given good care.

KADDERLY:

All brooms should be hung or rested on the handle end, so the weight doesn't come on the fibers.

(over)

VAN DEMAN:
Yes, they'll certainly last longer and sweep cleaner if they aren't all lopsided.

KADDERLY:
As a general thing I've observed it pays to buy good tools and take good care of them.

VAN DEMAN:
That's especially true of housecleaning brushes. If anybody wants to go in heavily for brushes there's a brush for nearly every cleaning job. Floor brushes... wall brushes.....radiator brushes.....upholstery brushes.....scrub brushes..... polishing brushes.

KADDERLY:
I understand there's even a special brush to clean Venetian blinds.

VAN DEMAN:
Yes, a funny-looking affair with three or more prongs, like long bristly fingers, that slip between the wooden slats and take the dust off several at one stroke.

KADDERLY:
That's a very specialized kind of a brush--of course.

VAN DEMAN:
Very. Most households get along perfectly well with a few of the standard kinds of cleaning brushes.

KADDERLY:
Each one selected to do the job it's intended to do.

VAN DEMAN:
Very definitely. A wall brush, for instance, needs to be soft and flexible--so it won't streak walls and snag delicate curtains. Some of the very best wall brushes are made of goat hair--some of horse hair. Then there are the wall dusters of wool fleece. They do a fine job as long as they're new and clean. But they soil easily, and they need to be cleaned with a dry-cleaning fluid. If they're washed with soap and water, they lose their fluffiness and mat badly.

KADDERLY:
On that point of washing brushes, if they have wire in the construction, it's well to see that it's galvanized wire that won't rust.

VAN DEMAN:
Yes, that's a good point to check on. Cleaning brushes need washing often, in warm soapsuds. They pick up a lot of dirt and oily particles from soot, and coal smoke, and the grease that gets into the air from cooking. If they're to do a good job of cleaning, the brushes themselves have to be kept clean.

KADDERLY:
And after they're washed they need to be thoroughly dried too, but not near the stove or too much heat.

VAN DEMAN:
You know a lot about brushes, Wallace.

KADDERLY:
Well, I know if good brushes are properly treated they'll last a long time. I found that out with paint brushes.

There's no telling what the war situation is going to do to our supply of bristles and fibers for brushes and many other uses. In the past, we've imported a lot of these raw materials from the orient and other parts of the world. We'll probably have to find new materials to take their places.

VAN DEMAN:
There's somewhat the same situation in aluminum. It's used a lot in cleaning tools, as handles and parts, and in dozens of other articles all through the house. You've probably noticed the references to it in the news already--the suggestion that we may need to conserve our aluminum supply.

KADDERLY:
That doesn't affect what we already have, or what's already fabricated and in the stores ready to buy.

VAN DEMAN:
To this extent it does. As good housecleaners we'll take the best possible care of what we buy and what we have on hand now. And when new materials come along we'll give them a friendly try out. Plastics may take the place of some of the metals needed for defense purposes.

KADDERLY:
When they do I'm sure you home economics people will be ready with the directions for giving them good care.

Ruth, what about the supply of your present housecleaning bulletin? That still holding out?

VAN DEMAN:
Yes, I'm sure it's still on the free list, and as you know packed with how-to-do-it information on cleaning everything about a house. And it gives so much more about selecting cleaning tools than we've been able to say today that this is just a lick and a promise.

KADDERLY:
Yes, it's a very useful bulletin for every home library. For as you've suggested, Ruth, new conditions bring new materials and new tools to clean the new materials.

VAN DEMAN:
Housecleaning's a live science.

KADDERLY:
"ith your permission, then, I'm going to direct our Farm and Home friends to the Bureau of Home Economics for copies of your Housecleaning bulletin. That all the title necessary?

VAN DEMAN:
That's all ---Housecleaning bulletin ---on a postcard.

KADDERLY:
(Ad lib directions for obtaining bulletin).

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